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23 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, COMIREX  
Associate Deputy Director,  
Science and Technology

SUBJECT : NSSM-72 Committee Meeting of 14 August

1. This memorandum is a brief summary of the discussions of the 14 August meeting of the NSSM-72 Committee, the principal purpose of which was to review the 1 August draft of the policy options paper relating to international cooperation in earth resource surveying by satellites.

2. In response to the request of the Chairman, [redacted] for comments, the AID representative indicated that a number of foreign governments had expressed interest in the concept of having earth resource surveys done of their own territories. Subsequently, a State Department representative expressed concern that the present draft does not devote sufficient attention to the problem of international reactions relating to the economic and sovereignty issues--a subject which was discussed more completely in the earlier draft, and a subject which she indicated still required considerable attention.

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3. Dave Elliott of the NSC staff provided forceful criticism of the overall thrust of the present draft. One major point was that the paper was incomplete in presenting all the available options. Specific reference was made to the area of commercially operated ERS systems. Furthermore, not all the "players" were represented in preparing this draft--a major gap was the absence of inputs from OMB relating to the budgetary consideration. Also, the paper was premature. He conceded that it had some "educational"

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value for the policy maker, but he felt that more reliable data was needed on the value of earth resources surveys from satellite systems. During the course of the discussion it was indicated that the cost-benefit analysis which the Department of the Interior had contracted for would not be ready until next summer. All in all, Elliott felt the present draft is not very helpful to the policy maker. (There appears to be the chicken-and-the-egg situation here--on one hand Elliott is claiming the policy makers need data on economic benefits versus costs before they can make their decisions; on the other hand, the draft paper argues that "firm policy guidelines" must be devised "well before all such economic studies can be completed in order to cope with the pressures that are rapidly building up in international forums to impose some degree of international control on ERS.")

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4. Arnold Frutkin of NASA was aggressively pushing for getting on with the review of the paper, work on which has been going on for two and a half years, but Elliott stood his ground on the above points. Finally [redacted] appointed Elliott, Frutkin, and [redacted] as an informal group to define the specific issues that this paper should address itself to. Comments and suggestions by others are encouraged and may be made directly to Elliott, or to either of the other two members of the informal group. Until these three report back, the review of the 1 August policy options paper will be in abeyance. ([redacted] was scheduled to go off on leave the next day.)

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5. I note that the previous assertion that the U.S. has a right to observe "is consistent with the Outer Space Treaty (Appendix A) and with the UN Charter and is essential for global satellite coverage for meteorological and other purposes" has been deleted from page 9 of the 1 August draft. This deletion stems primarily from the concerns of Robert White, the Administrator of NOAA, "about using our meteorological satellite experience as a precedent in the right to observe." My own reading of the Outer Space Treaty has left me with the feeling that this specific interpretation was to a large degree a matter of wishful thinking, and this deletion may help dispel a myth that appears to have gained some past ground among U.S. proponents of the unclassified earth resource survey satellites.

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COMIREX Staff

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